

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, CPRS, NA

SUBJECT: COMMENT ON ST MAARTEN SITUATION

FOR: ARA/CAR WAUCHOPE AND BURKE

WHILE SPECULATIVE AT THIS POINT, IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT AMERICAN CITIZENS ON ST MAARTEN, PARTICULARLY THOSE OWNING OR HAVING AN INTEREST IN CASINOS, MAY SOON APPROACH THE CONGEN OR THE DEPT ASKING FOR SPECIAL PROTECTION. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, IN LOW KEY BUT FIRM CONVERSATIONS I ADVISED HERBERT MERSER, MANAGER OF THE MULLET BAY BEACH HOTEL, THAT HE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO INVOLVE HIMSELF IN LOCAL POLITICS AS WINDS OF CHANGE WERE BLOWING IN THE CARIBBEAN THAT WOULD INEVITABLY AFFECT ST MAARTEN. MERCER IGNORED THESE SUGGESTIONS AND HAS DEEPLY INVOLVED HIMSELF WITH THE CLAUDE WATHEY-(LT GOV) VAN DELDEN POLITICAL MACHINE. IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION ON ST MAARTEN WILL TEND TO POLARIZE THE FAIRLY LOOSE POLITICAL SCENE INTO TWO STRONGLY ANTAGONISTIC POLITICAL CAMPS WITH LABOR AND THE YOUNG BLACKS ON ONE SIDE AND THE OLD GUARD OF ISLAND BLACKS, WHO SUPPORT WATHEY AND ARE BEHOLDEN TO HIM FOR PAST POLITICAL FAVORS, ON THE OTHER. THIS COULD BE THE CRUMBLING OF WATHEY'S POWER BASE AND WITH IT LEAVE AMERICAN CITIZENS, LIKE MERSER,

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WHO HAVE ALLIED THEMSELVES CLOSELY TO HIM FOR SPECIAL FAVORS

IN RUNNING CASINOS IN A VERY PRECARIOUS POSITION. IN THE
SHORT TERM, WATHEY'S POWER BASE COULD EVEN BE STRENGTHENED
BY THE BACKLASH AGAINST HAIZE'S TACTICS, BUT OVER A LONGER
PERIOD WATHEY COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKENED AND THOSE TIED
TO HIM WOULD CERTAINLY FEEL THE EFFECTS. WHEN AND IF THE
GUARD CHANGES, MERSEY AND THOSE LIKE HIM WILL HAVE MADE
THEIR BED AND WILL HAVE TO LIE IN IT.
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